THE DOCTRINE OF 'ISMAT and THE POSITION OF THE SAHAABA

By

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(upon whom be the mercy of Allah)

translated into English

by

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A Word From the Translator

This booklet is a translation of one of the many articles written in Urdu by my teacher, Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Banuri, upon whom be the mercy of Allah, for the monthly magazine of the Madrassah Arabia Islamia, ''Bayyinaat''. The essay was written, over ten years ago, in direct response to the publication of a book which Maulana believed to be misleading in its treatment of some of the basic doctrines of Islam; namely, the doctrine of 'Ismat as it relates to the Anbiyaa, and the orthodox position with regard to the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them.

At the time, owing to the notoriety of the book, Maulana did not think it necessary to mention its title or its author's name. Nor is there any reason today, as the book in question has not been translated into English, for us to rekindle old fires by naming the book and its author. What then, the reader may justifiably ask, is the purpose behind the translation of this essay, and its publication in booklet form? The best answer to this question can be found in the pages of the booklet itself. I am referring, of course, to the abundance of useful information in those pages which concerns those aspects of Islam which are all too often taken for granted, and only passingly, if ever, given serious thought by even the educated muslim public. Then, it is the dissemination of that knowledge, rather than any desire to stir up what has already been put to rest, which is the primary concern of the translator and publishers. And it is Allah who prospers and assists; in Him do we trust, and unto Him do we return.

Yusuf Talal Ali
Ramazan ul Mubaarak/1398

Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem

THE OFFICE OF NUBUWWAT

It is an incontrovertible truth that Nubuwwat or Risaalat is that highest of offices which is conferred by the Almighty upon His special slaves. In the entire universe it is man alone who is called 'Ashraf ul Makhluqaat' (the noblest of all created things), and it is Nubuwwat which is at the summit of all human perfection. All other human ranks and achievements are below this. The most sublime human reflection is incapable of approaching even the frontiers of Nubuwwat; and there is no human excellence or eminence which is worthy of touching even the dust on the road to Nubuwwat. Beyond Nubuwwat there is one rank only, the rank of Allah most High's godhood and Rububiyyat.

The office of Nubuwwat is above human reason. Finally, only the One who has granted it is capable of fully comprehending its reality; or then again only those blessed beings who have been granted this sublime office. Except for these, the rest of mankind are possessed of knowledge and understanding too feeble to percieve the secret of Nubuwwat, or to properly grasp its full meaning or true nature. In the same way that an unlettered person is unaware of the reality of learning, a person who is not himself a Nabiyy is unaware of the reality of Nubuwwat. In fact, if we really think about it it should be clear that, leaving aside the office of Nubuwwat, the same is true of any ordinary skill or profession; that only the person who has himself acquired that skill is capable of understanding the

complete reality of it—and even then his understanding of that reality will go only as far as the degree of skill which he had developed in his particular field.

Our teacher, Hazrat Imam ul Asr, Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri of Deoband, may Allah illumine his resting place, used to say, "What of Nubuwwat? Our minds are incapable of fathoming even the reality of Ijtehaad!" In other words, concerning Ijtehaad our knowledge is limited to the superficial. Indeed whatever we do know about the subject is little more than surface knowledge Thus, the reality of Ijtehaad can be properly perceived only by a Mujtahid. So, in much the same way, knowledge of Nubuwwat can be possessed by an ordinary man only in the sense that he can recognize its signs and requisites

Concerning the Nabiyy, any Nabiyy, upon whom be peace, we know only that;

> For the office of Nubuwwat Allah most High has selected only those gifted and chaste personalities whose exteriors and interiors, whose forms and substances, whose bodies and souls are, in every respect, superior to those of ordinary men. Then, these are born of such unblemished extraction, and such auspicious constitution that their every wish is pursuant to the Will and Pleasure of Allah. These are the ones who are adorned with the robe of 'Ismat. The Almighty, in His omnipotence, watches over them constantly so that they receive His protection in virtually every move that they make In this way they remain above the promptings and power of Shaytan.

In such persons the occurence of wrongdoing or disobedience is impossible and logically inconceivable. This is what is meant by the term 'Ismat, and the person so favored is called Masoom. 'Ismat is essential to Nubuwwat. In the same way that it is inconceivable that Nubuwwat could for a moment be lifted from a Nabiyy, not even the supposition or conjecture can be made that 'Ismat could be separated from Nubuwwat or a Nabiyy. Allah forbid!

Ulemaa have confirmed that to be Masoom is one thing and that to be Mahfooz is another. The Masoom is a person for whom the commission of wrongdoing is impossible, while the Mahfooz is a person for whom the commission of wrongdoing is possible but who, in spite of that, does not commit any wrongdoing. Or, to put it more simply, the Masoom is incapable of wrongdoing, and the Mahfooz, though he is capable of it, does not engage in it. It is on this basis that the Anbiyaa, upon whom be peace, are termed Masoom; and that the Awliyaa (Saints), including the Sahaaba, upon whom be Allah's mercy, are termed Mahfooz.

Now, to come to the point, for the most sublime office of Nubuwwat Allah most High selects only those personalities who, in matters of deed and ancestry, character and works, intelligence and insight, resolution and zeal, and in every other human perfection, are the most accomplished and outstanding figures of their times. A Nabiyy is unique among his contemporaries in every perfection of body and soul, and no non-Nabiyy can equal him in any perfection of importance. In the terminology of the Quraan and Shariat, Allah chooses (Ikhtiyaar), elects (Intikhaab) and singles out (Ijtibaa) these personalities. Who does not know that Allah's knowledge encompasses every atom in the universe? For Him everything, external and internal, hidden and open, is manifest. Past, present, and future are known to him at one and the same time. There is no possibility of His making a mistake, or being unaware of something. These facts are attested to by innumerable verses of the Quraan.

« إن الله كان بكل شيئ عليماً »

Surely Allah knows everything (4:33)

« ولا يعزب عن ربك من مثقال ذرة فى الأرض ولا فى السماء »

And not an atom's weight in the earth or in the sky escapes your Rabb (10:62)

« يعلم سركم وجهركم »

He knows your secrets and what you utter (6.3)

Obviously, when the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah selects a person for the office of Nubuwwat there can remain no possibility of that person's being somehow inadequate for the position. Certainly the blessed personalities chosen from among all mankind for this office will be the most perfect, the most accomplished, the most sublime, and the most suitable of all people. There are, nevertheless, differences in rank and accomplishment between the different Anbiyaa, peace be upon them.

It is also an accepted fact that Nubuwwat and Risaalat are the gifts of Allah. These have nothing to do with acquisition (Kasb), and are surely not earned by aceticism, or long hours in worship, or spiritual disciplines. In this world it is true that perfection is attained by hard work and discipline. Nubuwwat and Risaalat, however, are the selected gifts of Allah; for those offices He chooses whom He wills. The Quraan is replete with verses which clearly convey this meaning:

« الله يصطفي من الملائكة رسلاً ومن الناس »

Allah chooses from the angels Rasuls, and from mankind (22:75)

« الله أعلم حيث يجعل رسالته »

Allah knows best where to place His Risaalat (6:124)

MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING NUBUWWAT

Once we have properly understood these truths of the Shariat the question of whether a Nabiyy or Rasul is capable of deficiencies in performing the duties of his office need not even arise. It is inconceivable that, Allah forbid, any Nabiyy or Rasul ever fell short in the performance of his duties. Therefore, to make the following statements:

1. 'A certain Nabiyy fell short in the performance of the essentials of Risaalat.'

2. 'A certain Nabiyy proved inadequate in the performance of his duties.'

3. 'A certain Nabiyy, without permission from Allah, shrank from his duty.'

is itself a great shortcoming, and an indication of something quite more serious.

Likewise, on the basis of one's inability to get to the bottom of a difficult question, to present the likes of the following random conjecture as some kind of accepted principle:

'Like any other man the Nabiyy is also incapable of maintaining at all times the true believer's highest standards of perfection. Sometimes he too is overcome by his own human frailties. Then, when he is cautioned by the Almighty that what he is doing has been the result of his own pre-Islamic sensitivities, he immediately reverts to an Islamic frame of mind.'

is reckless to an extreme and an admonitory example of ignorance concerning the office of Nubuwwat.

چون ندیدند حقیقت ره افسانه زدند

Not having seen the way of truth, they go the way of myth.

Consider the following statement:

'There are times when, and this should be so, the veil of 'Ismat is lifted from the Nabiyy or Rasul. Then he is caused to commit one or two acts of wrongdoing as a testament to his humanity.'

This example of falacious sophistry is so fraught with danger that (if such a thing were possible) the foundations of every revealed religion would tremble at its mention.

If 'Ismat could be separated from Nubuwwat it would mean that for as long as this separation remained in effect the Nabiyy would cease to function as an exemplary personality (Uswah) for

his Ummat. Instead of being 'Al Ameen' (the Trustworthy), the Nabiyy would be no different from anyone else. Or, to speak in simplified terms, during such a separation (when 'Ismat is lifted and, Allah forbid, the Nabiyy is caused to do wrong), Nubuwwat itself, with all its requisites and accompaniments, would be lifted from the Nabiyy. It is not difficult to see that if such faulty logic were accepted the Deen ul Islam would crumble and fall. Everything the Nabiyy said would be open to suspicion. Nothing that he taught, nothing that he did, nothing that he said could be relied upon because of the possibility that what he taught, did, or said took place during a period when 'Ismat was lifted, and when Nubuwwat was suspended To outward appearances, perhaps this kind of philosophizing may hold some kind of attraction, but, if we ponder the matter thoroughly we will find that it is so patently absurd that any person possessed of reason who has properly understood Allah's religion will reject it out of hand Those who author this type of statement are clearly ignorant of the reality of (prophetic) knowledge, and have obviously misunderstood the requirements of Nubuwwat.

Likewise, the following statement will be seen to be void of any understanding or knowledge:

> 'Until we see that the Anbiyaa have committed a few acts of wrongdoing like other men, we cannot be sure that they are human.'

Who does not know that the Anbiyaa, upon whom be peace, eat and drink and, like everyone else, are subject to all kinds of incidental diseases and accidents? They are born of men, and from them men are born. But aside from all this, they, upon whom be peace, announce over and over again that they are human beings like everyone else. Then, after all that, is it really necessary that they engage in unlawful wrongdoing to clear up, once and for all, any suspicions that someone might have had about their humanity? Is it only then that we will be convinced that they are human?

It would be well for us to remember here that negligence, mistakes, and forgetfulness are part of human nature. Wrongdoing and transgression, however, are part, not of human nature, but of Shaytan's nature. For this reason the commission of wrongdoing on the part of the Anbiyaa, instead of attesting to their humanity would attest to something quite different. Finally, who asked those people who are unable to differentiate between a mistake and an act of wrongdoing to enter into subtle theological discussions? Or was it that they desired to bear out the popular maxim:

« ضلوا فأضلوا »

They fell into error themselves, and they led others astray.

Anyway, 'Ismat, like the other perfections of Nubuwwat, is essential to every Nabiyy. Now, consider the following: that most blessed of all personalities who was chosen to stand at the head of all the Anbiyaa and Mursaleen, the one who was crowned with the Risaalat ul Kubraa (the Greatest of Missions), the one of whom it has rightly been said:

بعد از خدا بزرگ توئی قصہ مختصر

To make a long story short, after Allah comes you.

the one who was granted the highest of all offices, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him; who can possibly realize the truth of his nobilty of character and perfections, his purity and integrity, his sanctity and majesty, his righteousness and 'Ismat, his Risaalat and Nubuwwat? If, concerning this unassailable personality someone were to say something to the effect that for a time 'Ismat was lifted from him, upon whom be peace, would that not be a crime of enormous proportions?

THE POSITION OF THE SAHAABA

When Hazrat Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, became the Khaatam un Nabiyyeen (the Last Nabiyy) and

was honored with the highest rank of any of those who occupied the office of Nubuwwat; and when his, upon whom be peace, Shariat was declared to be the Last Shariat until the Day of Rising, two things became necessary. First, that this Last Shariat remain preserved intact until the coming of the Hour; and second, that, in the same way that the Shariat is preserved in word, it also be preserved in deed.

Islam is not just a collection of principles, theories, and ideas. It is a complete practical system as well. Indeed, for every theory or principle put forth by Islam there is a corresponding path of action. This is why it is essential that the Muhammedan Shariat, a thousand thousand blessings upon its namesake, be preserved in word and in deed alike. For the task of preserving the Shariat, then, there was clearly a need for a dedicated group of believers who would act on what they learned.

At the head of the list of those who acted to preserve the Shariat were the Sahaaba Kiraam, may Allah be pleased with them. They were the people who learned Islam directly from Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and then put into practice what they had been taught, and then taught those who came after them. They were the people who, having learned at the hands of the Master, upon whom be peace, were able to mould their characters in accordance with the designs of the Almighty and thus attain purity of temperament and conduct. They were the people who swept aside every false creed and accepted the true religion. And they were the people who, in order to acquire for themselves the pleasure of Allah, sacrificed everything they had at the feet of Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. Whenever any one of them did anything improper he was immediately corrected by the Almighty.

In short, the group of people known as the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, was that incredibly fortunate group of people for whom Rasullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was sent as a teacher and guide. No matter how many thanks they

gave for this heaven-sent blessing it will not have been enough, and no matter how much pride they took in being so honored it will surely have been too little.

« لقد من الله على المؤمنين إذ بعث فيهم رسولاً من أنفسهم يتلو عليهم آياته ويزكيهم ويعلمهم الكتاب والحكمة وإن كانوا من قبل لفي ضلال مبين »

Truly Allah was gracious to the believers when He sent among them a Rasul from themselves, to recite to them His signs, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom, though before they were in manifest error. (3:164)

THE SAHAABA IN THE QURAN

Since the heavenly inheritance of Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, his legacy of knowledge and practice, was to be bestowed upon the Sahaaba, it was necessary that they be made worthy of the trust of succeeding generations. For this reason they are praised over and over again in the Quraan and in the Hadith.

1. The Divine Revelation explains that they are worthy of trust and that they have been purified, testifies to their character and righteousness, and grants them the lofty position of being witnesses to the Muhammadan Risaalat:

« محمد رسول الله والذين معه أشداء على الكفار رحماء بينهم تراهم ركعاً سجداً يبتغون فضلاً من الله ورضوانا سيماهم في وجوههم من أثر السجود »

Muhammad is the Rasul of Allah, and those who are with him are severe with unbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them in Ruku and Sajda, seeking bounty with Allah and His pleasure. Their mark is on their faces, the trace of Sajda. (48:29)

In this verse the words 'Muhammad is the Rasul of Allah' are presented as a claim. In what follows, the claim is substantiated by mention of the conduct and bearing of the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them. In other words, if anyone has any doubts about the truth of Muhammed's being Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, he need only to look on the blessed lives of the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, and then let his conscience decide for him.

2. When the standard of faith was set by the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, the entire Ummat was called on to follow their example; and those who loosed their tongues in opposition to them were stamped with the seal of Nifaaq (hypocrisy) and foolishness:

« وإذا قيل لهم آمنوا كما آمن الناس قالوا أنؤمن كما آمن
السفهاء ألا إنهم هم السفهاء ولكن لا يعلمون »

When it is said to them (the hypocrites), 'Believe as the people (Sahaaba) believe', they say 'Shall we believe as the fools believe?' Truly they are themselves the foolish ones, but they do not know. (2:13)

3. Time and time again the Sahaaba were blessed with the joyful tidings that:

« رضى الله عنهم ورضوا عنه »

Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. (5:119) (57:22) (98:8)

Indeed, these tidings were repeated so often that they have become as a cant word to the people of this Ummat. In the same way that we are incapable of taking the name of Rasulullah without automatically saying, 'the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him', we automatically say, 'may Allah be pleased with him', after taking the name of one of the Sahaaba.

Furthermore, it should be obvious that Allah most High did not say that He was pleased with them on the basis of appearances only. Knowing their past, present, and future, their interiors and their exteriors, Allah most High announced that He was pleased with them. From this it should be more than clear that until they breathed their last they did nothing to deprive themselves of this Divine Pleasure.

It should also be obvious that when Allah is pleased with someone, the entire Ummat should also be pleased with that person. Concerning any other person we might have to resort to conjecture on the question of whether or not Allah most High was pleased with him; but concerning the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, we have the evidence of the Quraan! Then, if, in spite of all this, someone attempts to prove that the Sahaaba were wrongdoers, he is clearly placing himself in opposition to Allah.

4. When the way of the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, was established as the practical standard for this Ummat, any kind of opposition to it was explained to be direct opposition to Rasulullah, upon whom be peace.

« ومن يشاقق الرسول من بعد ما تبين له الهدى ويتبع غير سبيل
المؤمنين نوله ما تولى ونصله جهنم وساءت مصيراً »

And whoso opposes the Rasul (upon whom be peace after the guidance has become clear to him, and follows a way other than the believer's (Sahaaba), him we shall turn over to what he has turned to, and We shall put him in the Fire—a hapless journey's end. (4:115)

In this verse the word 'believers' refers first of all to the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them. From this it is obvious that the proper way to follow the Rasul, peace and blessings be upon him, is to adopt the way of the Sahaaba in all matters of conduct and character.

5. To conclude, the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, were promised that in the shadow of Rasulullah's mercy, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, they would be granted every honor, and spared all humiliation.

« يوم لا يخزى الله النبى والذين آمنوا معه نورهم يسعى بين أيديهم وبأيمانهم »

> On the day when Allah will not abase the Nabiyy and those who believe with him, their light running before them, and on their right hands. (22:8)

There are scores of other such verses concerning the virtues and excellence of the Sahaaba Kiraam, may Allah be pleased with them. From all this it should have become apparent by now that if these people, as the first link in the chain of believers, are ascertained to have been unworthy of our trust, Allah forbid, or remiss in their bearing and behavior, or incapable of providing practical or doctrinal counsel, then the fabric of the Deen ul Islam would be rent and, perish the thought, the Muhammaden Risaalat faulted.

CRITICISM OF THE SAHAABA

It is a well known rule of thumb that the way to cast doubt on the authenticity of any kind of information is to first make a target of the one, or ones, who conveyed the information; attempt to discolor their doings, assasinate their characters, destroy people's confidence in them. Since the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, were the first ones to convey information concerning the Deen ul Islam, the enemies of Islam singled them out as the prime targets in their campaign of slander and villification.

In fact, in spite of the gaping doctrinal differences between the many schismatic and heretical sects which have branched off from Islam in the past, the one thing they seem to have in common is their criticism of the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them. The enemies of Islam have attempted to fault their bearing and

conduct, malign them in any way, criticize their character, detract from their accomplishments, accuse them of preferring worldly wealth to the commandments of Allah, and label them usurpers, frauds, and bigoted tribalists.

Finally, these schismatics hit the heights of fanaticism when they raise the question of whether or not the people who, according to the Quraan, set the standard of belief for the entire Ummat:

« آمنوا كما آمن الناس »

'Believe as the people (Sahaaba) believe.' (2:13)

were actually believers!

Or, concerning the people who watered the tree of Islam with their blood, may Allah be pleased with them, these heretics dare to say that they were incapable of maintaining Islam's highest standards of belief? And these were the people, may Allah be pleased with them, about whom the Almighty said:

« رجال صدقوا ما عاهدوا الله عليه فمنهم من قضى نحبه ومنهم
من ينتظر وما بدلوا تبديلا »

> men who were true to their covenant with Allah; some of them have fulfilled their vow by laying down their lives, and some of them are still waiting, and they have not weakened in their resolve in the least. (33:24)

Nevertheless, according to the schismatics, these blessed people, may Allah be pleased with them, were void of all truthfulness, loyalty, sincerity, and faith! Concerning those sincere people who left their wives, children, homes, businesses, relatives, friends, and comfort for the pleasure of Allah, sacrificing everything for the sake of Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him; concerning those people, may Allah be pleased with them, it is said by the schismatics that they were slaves to their greed, and that they cared more for their own personal gain than they did for the commandments of Allah and His Rasul, upon whom be peace!

« لقد جئتم شيئاً إداً »

You have indeed advanced something hideous. (19:90)

Obviously it is inconceivable that the people of this Ummat could ever give credence to this kind of frivolous prattle. And Allah most High is not unaware of the heresies stirred up by these people. Indeed He has said:

« والله متم نوره ولو كره الكافرون »

And Allah will perfect His light, though the unbelievers be adverse (61:8)

These, then, are the reasons for Allah most High's repeated praise for the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, His attestation to their reliability, and His confirmation of their integrity. Indeed He has said,

« أولئك كتب في قلوبهم الإيمان وأيدهم بروح منه »

Those—He has written faith upon their hearts, and He has confirmed them with a spirit from Himself. (58:22)

THE SAHAABA IN THE HADITH

In countless Hadith, Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, enumerated the virtues of his Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them. In the majority of these Hadith the Rightly-guided Khalifas, Hazrat Abu Bakr, Hazrat Umar, Hazrat Uthman, and Hazrat Ali are mentioned in particular. It should be obvious from the care taken by Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, in recounting the Sahaaba's virtues, accomplishments, unique qualities, and inner perfections that he, upon whom be peace, was keen to have his Ummat understand that the Sahaaba were a cut above the ordinary. Indeed, since the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, came in direct contact with the Rasul, upon whom be peace, our love for them is the same

as our love for him, upon whom be peace. Therefore, even the slightest criticism of those fortunate people, may Allah be pleased with them, is something which gives great offense to the people of this Ummat.

The Imam Tirmizi relates on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mughaffal, may Allah be pleased with him, that Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said;

« الله الله في أصحابي لا تتخذوهم غرضاً من بعدي ؛ فمن أحبهم فبحبي أحبهم ومن أبغضهم فببغضي أبغضهم ، ومن آذاهم فقد آذاني ، ومن آذاني فقد آذى الله ، ومن آذى الله يوشك أن يأخذه »

> Fear Allah, fear Allah regarding my Sahaaba! Do not make targets of them after I am gone. For whoever has love for them, has love for them because of his love for me. And whoever has hate for them, has hate for them because of his hate for me. Then whoever troubles them, troubles me. And whoever troubles me, troubles Allah. And whoever troubles Allah will quickly be taken to account.

The people of this Ummat were informed that the greatest deed performed by the greatest one of them would be nothing in comparison to the least deed of the least of the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them. For this reason no one in this Ummat has the right to say anything derogatory about the Sahaaba. Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is reported by the Imams Bukhari and Muslim to have said:

« لا تسبوا أصحابي فلو أن أحدكم أنفق مثل أحد ذهباً ما بلغ مد أحدهم ولا نصيفه »

Do not malign my Sahaaba! For if one of you were to give a mountain of gold in the way of Allah, it would not compare to a bushel of barley given by one of my Sahaaba.

The rank given to the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, is so high that, according to a Hadith related by Al Khateeb Al Baghdadi on the authority of Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, Rasulullah, upon whom be peace, ordered the people of this Ummat to reply in the following way to anyone who has the audacity to speak badly of them:

« إذا رأيتم الذين يسبون أصحابي فقولوا : لعنة الله على شركم »

When you find someone speaking badly of my Sahaaba, say to him, 'The curse of Allah be upon the worst of the two of you.'

It is not our intention here to list every Hadith concerning the Sahaaba may Allah be pleased with them, but what we want to say is that if anyone, after examining the evidence of the Quraan and Hadith, still insists on criticizing the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, then, aside from the fact that his rebuff of this evidence is synonomous to his denial of the Quraan and Hadith (and therefore Kufr), the logical consequence of his criticism is the allegation that Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, fell short in the performance of the duties of his Risaalat; that he, upon whom be peace, was unable to purify the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them.

« بعث رسولاً من أنفسهم يتلو عليهم آياته ويزكيهم ويعلمهم الكتاب والحكمة »

He sent among them a Rasul from themselves, to recite to them His signs, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom. (3:164)

But since Allah most High has affirmed in the Quraan that they actually were purified, this criticism will be seen to be in direct opposition to the Quraan! So, in spite of all this, do we continue with our criticism of the Sahaaba? Or should we say that since Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was

unsuccessful in his mission it is obvious that Allah most High made a mistake in His choice of a Rasul? Allah forbid! We have indeed strayed far afield.

CRITICS OF THE SAHAABA

According to the largest sect of Islamic schismatics, and we seek refuge in Allah from all ignorance and impudence, Allah most High sometimes learns things that He did not know before! This they call 'Badaa'. As if Allah's knowledge was somehow incomplete! Now, if this is the kind of belief they have concerning the Almighty, what do you suppose they believe concerning the Rasul, upon whom be peace, and the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them?

Anyway, the point is that when you criticize the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, or publicize their mistakes, or make them the target of your allegations, you, whether you realize it or not, bring Allah, the Rasul, upon whom be peace, the Quraan, and the Sunnat under criticism; or, in other words, the whole of the Deen ul Islam! It is not unlikely that Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had this in mind when he said:

« من آذاهم فقد آذانى ، ومن آذانى فقد آذى الله ، ومن آذى الله يوشك أن يأخذه »

Then whoever troubles them, troubles me. And whoever troubles me, troubles Allah. And whoever troubles Allah, will quickly be taken to account.

This is why, in contrast to every schismatic sect, the distinctive feature of the Sunni Orthodoxy has been their love and respect for the Sahaaba Kiraam, may Allah be pleased with them. All of Orthodoxy is agreed on the following article of faith:

« ونكف عن ذكر الصحابة إلا بخير »

We have nothing but good to say about the Sahaaba.

Then the outstanding difference between the Sunni Orthodoxy and the schismatics is their position in regard to the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them. A person who makes allegations against the Sahaaba, who searches out their every mistake, or who names them as the guilty party in his accusations is obviously not a member of the Sunni Orthodoxy.

THE SAHAABA AND THE GENTLEMEN SCHOLARS

As for those gentlemen who, out of what they suppose to be sincerity and good intentions, have made a systematic philosophy out of maligning the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, calling it research, or an answer to the pressing questions of the day; whether they know it or not the only effect their researches will have will be to foment within their readers a loathing, in the name of Islam, for everything thing Islamic! Next they'll be having an international conference for critics of the Sahaaba; critics without knowledge, without understanding, without acumen, without any sense at all!

Unfortunately, this has already passed from the realm of possibility to the world of events.

الأمان الحفيظ

Allah preserve us and give us peace!

By way of excuse they say, 'All of this information was in the history books anyway. We are guilty only of having collected it.' It is unfortunate that they, in presenting this excuse, have ignored so many matters of fundamental importance. Otherwise, it is more than obvious that such a feeble excuse is hopelessly inadequate.

HISTORY AND AUTHENTICITY

We have already seen the textual evidence of the Quraan and Hadith prohibiting criticism of the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased

with them. The Ulemaa of the Sunni Orthodoxy are in complete agreement on this point. Then, in comparison to this kind of indisputable evidence, of what import are the tales and legends of the early muslim historians? With them the recording of history was a process whereby the historian collected indiscriminately any and all information about a certain event or person, regardless of whether or not the information was authentic. The standards of authenticity which were applied to the Hadith were never applied to history. No one ever attempted to do so. For this reason the scholars of Hadith refused to take responsiblity for the authenticity of historical narrations.

The verse of the reknowned scholar of Hadith, Hafiz Zain ud Deen al 'Iraqi sums the matter up quite nicely:

وليعلم الطالب أن السيرا   يجمع ما صح وما قد أنكرا

The student should know that history is a collection of the authentic and the spurious alike.

Now, if someone wants to prove something by going through the history books until he finds a shred of information in support of his claim, ignoring the requirements of reason and revelation, he should realize that in the same way that he ponders over whether a certain historical narration will be useful in proving his point, he should also consider whether or not that narration is in any way contrary to the Shariat of Islam or common sense. To illustrate this point it should suffice here to mention only one example.

A Rightly-guided Khalifa is defined as a muslim ruler who faithfully adheres to the Way of Nubuwwat, and who does, or decides, nothing in contravention to the standards of that Way. Recently, someone wrote of one of the four Rightly-guided Khalifas, accusing him of having unjustly awarded a full fifth of the spoils of war (amounting to over five Lakh Dinars) to one of his relatives. The question that now arises is whether or not this story accurately

depicts the Way of Nubuwwat, or the character of a Rightly-guided Khalifa.

If this story was to be accepted word for word would it not mean that the moral and religious standards of the Rightly-guided Khalifas, may Allah be pleased with them, were no higher than our present day dictators who think nothing of giving their relatives route permits and import licenses?

HISTORY AND THE ULEMAA

The second point to be made here is that these historical narrations didn't just come to light yesterday. The great Ulemaa of this Ummat have leafed through those very same pages and provided satisfactory explanations for everything narrated therein. In fact, by reading what was written by those Ulema one can see how easily these matters can be explained. But now we have someone who, in the name of impartial research, comes along and presents these same matters in the worst possible light, so that the Sahaaba are faulted, and their deeds and accomplishments are debased and derided. Now, are we supposed to give the author of these infamies the benefit of the doubt, in the same way that he gave the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, the benefit of the doubt?

The amazing thing about this person is that when he is referred to the work of the great scholars of this Ummat concerning these same matters, he dismisses them as 'defense attorneys', and ignores what they have written. This court of his is indeed unique! On the basis of the evidence produced by the prosecution alone sentence is passed; and the arguments of the defense are rejected because the defense attorney is found to be partial to his client!

From the testimony of the Quraan and Hadith given above, and the concensus of opinion among the Ulemaa of the Ummat, it should be clear that not only scholars of the caliber of Ibn Taymiyyah and Shah Abdul Aziz, but Allah most High Himself, and His Rasul, upon

whom be peace, and the entire muslim Ummat are the attorneys for the defense of the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them. It remains now for each person to decide for himself whether he wants to join the defense, or the prosecution.

A COUNTERFEIT OF HISTORY

A third point could be made here. To select a number of isolated events from a collection of dubious historical narrations and then make of them a sort of systematic philosophy, or to extract from specific events general principles and then to arrange them under headings which even the most jaded wrongdoer of our own century would resent having said about himself; this can be called neither service to Islam nor a proper reading of history. One might, however, call it ia a counterfeit of history. In the words of the poet, Shaykh Saadi of Shiraz:

ولیکن بکف دشمن است

But the pen is in the hands of the enemy!

I ask you, would any muslim like to hear it said about himself that he altered the constitution framed by Allah? Or that he made the public treasury into his own personal slavegirl? Or that he deprived the muslims of the right to enjoin the good and forbid the wrong? Or that he defiled the workings of justice and equality? Or that he deliberately spurned the directives of the Quraan and Hadith? Or that he put an end to the supremacy of Allah's law? Or that he trampled over the rights of others for the sake of his own, and his relatives', financial betterment?

Can any person possessed of normal religious sentiments sit and listen to these wild allegations in complete calm and detachment? If not, and surely he could not, then can we allow ourselves to remain silent when the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, are subjected to such a savage attack? Is this how we show our

esteem and respect for the Sahaaba? Is this how we go about saying nothing but good about them? Do the companions of Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, deserve any better than this from us? Is this what our religious zeal requires of us? Have we forgotten the words of Rasulullah, the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him?

« إذا رأيتم الذين يسبون أصحابي فقولوا : لعنة الله على شركم »

When you find someone speaking badly of my Sahaaba, say to him, 'The curse of Allah be upon the worst of the two of you.'

CONCLUSION

The Sahaaba of Rasulullah, upon whom be peace, set the standards of faith and practice for all those who came after them. The privilege given them of being able to sit in the company of Allah's Last Rasul, peace be upon him, is unequalled by anything the Almighty granted to even the greatest Wali or Outub. Then, if anyone in this Ummat, no matter how great a thinker or reformer he may be, criticizes the Sahaaba, may Allah be pleased with them, he will show himself to be inclined toward the heretical. Ayyaz of Ghazna was advised:

أياز قدر خويش بشناس

Ayyaz! Know your place!

Finally, this world is little more than a practice range for truth and falsehood. And very often it happens that falsehood is dressed in the garb of truth. Sometimes a man will suppose his erroneous theories to be correct, and then persist in them until his mind becomes twisted and finally he is deprived of the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood. This is an extremely serious matter. It has never been the mark of the true scholar to persist in what he has opined when others, in all sincerity, have cautioned him against holding such views. The mark of the true scholar is his immediate

acceptance of the truth when it is presented to him. May Allah preserve us, and all our muslim brethren, from the evil of heresy and divigation! And grant us the Taufiq to become followers of the truth!

« ربنا لا تزغ قلوبنا بعد إذ هديتنا ، وهب لنا من لدنك رحمة إنك أنت الوهاب » وصلى الله على خير خلقه صفوة البريـــة محمد وعلى آله وأصحابه وأتباعه أجمعين . آمين

Our Rabb! Make not our hearts to swerve after You have guided us; and give us mercy from Your presence: Surely, You are the Giver. And may Allah give peace to the finest of His creations, the purest of mankind, Muhammed, and to his family, and his Sahaaba, and all of his followers. Ameen.